# Nile Basin Development Challenge (NBDC) Strategies project (N2)

**Jeldu Farmers’ Training Report**

**23 August, 2013**

**Jeldu**

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**Background:**

Refreshment training on fodder management and utilization for the old project farmers (farmers who started fodder intervention research in 2012) was one of the activities in the Jeldu IP’s action plan. Though the training was planned to be provided by the IP’s technical group members, the NBDC team from past experiences realized the importance of backstopping the training technically so that it is delivered effectively to the farmers for them be able to manage and utilize the fodder with less technical problems during their farm operations.

Accordingly, the NBDC team consisting of Tsehay Regassa, Gerba Leta and Aberra Adie provided backstopping services to the training delivered by the IP’s technical group members comprising Holeta research center, Ambo University, Hundee (local NGO) and the Jeldu Woreda Livestock Office and Office of Agriculture.

**The Training**

The training program consisted two parts: Theoretical part which included detailed class lecture on the various feed types and their agronomic characteristics including their uses and practical demonstration of planting and harvesting of some of the improved forages on one of the project farmer’s field. A total of 69 farmers out of which 9 were women participated in the training. This number includes some volunteer farmers who were not initially called for the training but heard about the training and were interested to join.

The main theme of the training was: Livestock fodder production, management and utilization. The characteristics different types of feed resources (crop residues, native grasses for grazing, green cut & carry and hay making, supplemental feeds from factory by-products and improved forages) along with the required management practices for each type of feed resource have been discussed during the training. Much deeper discussion in the establishment, management and utilization of Desho grass and Napier grass have been made by the NBDC team and the members of the technical group of the IP. Ato Zewdie Wondatir (Holeta Research Center), Ato Andinet Deresse (Ambo University) and Ato Tibebu Seifu (Woreda Livestock Agency) delivered the training from the technical group members’ side. Andinet also assisted in the translation of the discussions from Amharic and to Oromiffa and vice-versa. The NBDC team assisted the development of the training lay out and translation of the contents in to Amharic and also took part in delivery of the training. The training was an interactive one and that farmers also shared their experiences so far with the management of the traditional feeds and the improved forages.



**Contents**

**Improved forages:**

Types of forages- Grasses, Legumes, MPTs

Characteristics of each type of forage

Establishment methods - Back yard, mixed with other crops, on soil bands, pure stands

Uses – Livestock fodder, soil fertility, increased production, control soil erosion, fencing, etc.

**Natural pasture management:**

Grazing land management – area closure, removing invasive weeds, manuring/chemical fertilizer, over-sowing improved forages, stocking rate, rotational grazing

Hay making- stage of growth at harvest, weather condition at harvest, moisture level at storage, conservation, feeding

**Crop residues:**

Types of crop residues – legume (pulses) residue, cereal residues including stemmy cereals

Harvest and conservation – Time of harvest and conservation,

Feeding – Chopping, mixing with supplemental feed resources (improved forages, factory by-products, minerals)

**Factory by-products:**

Types – Grain mill by-products (energy sources), oil processing by-products (protein sources)

Utilization – strategic feeding mixed with crop residues &/or hay, only as supplement and not basal





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**Farmers’ experiences shared during the training:**

* They feed pulse residues to equines and cereal residues to cattle
* Factory by-products are not easily accessible. One has to travel up to Ginchi to obtain them and they can be fed to only fattening animals due to their cost.
* Livestock productivity is small due to breed, overstocking, traditional feeding systems and health problems
* Improved forages are expected to be better in quality (nutrients), yield, and they should be of multiple purpose
* Both grain and straw of Oats are fed to animals at mature stage. Some people eat the grain. Cattle are not happy with oats straw produced at grain maturity. So farmers mix Oats straw with straws of other crops in order to feed to cattle
* Vetch dominated Oats when planted in mixture
* Performance of Napier grass is poor at the higher areas and it is affected by rodents
* Desho grass is the best performing improved forage in the area. However, if it is left to over-mature the leaves develop sharp edges which reduces palatability by animals
* Crop residues are treated traditionally with salt to increase intake
* Some literate farmers who had a chance to get trainings through government or NGO facilitation, were able to share their knowledge on modern hay making practices
* Some farmers practice chopping of stemmy cereal residues with pick- axe during feeding



Fact sheets which were prepared in Oromiffa language for Oats, Vetch, Alfalfa, Napier grass, Desho grass and Fodder beets were distributed to the trainees with some English copies to the experts and DAs.

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**Practical field training**

The practical training session was done on the Desho farm of Ato Aberra Birhanu, the project farmer who planted Desho grass first at his backyard and then expanded it to the crop field from which he sold Birr 10,000 worth Desho planting material to the farmers in the area. Desho planting, management and harvesting methods have been demonstrated to the old and new farmers by Aberra Birhanu and NBDC experts. Aberra also shared his experience with the Desho to the trainees.

Few farmers were interviewed for their comments about the training using digital audio recorder. In their response to the questions about their insights of the training, some farmers responded that they have been to trainings before, but this is different and that they got many new things and that they will practice them when they go home. They also promised that they will share the lessons to their fellow farmers who did not participate in the training.



Tsehay Regassa/Aberra Adie

October 21, 2013